

Sociological amnesia: an introduction

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Chapter 1

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Trajectories: Success and Failure

In the late nineteenth century, a group of around twenty members of the American Economic Association (AEA) met in a private dining-room of a hotel for an informal talk about the subject of 'sociology'. Albion Small, who was present at the AEA meeting, recalled a pent-up desire among those in attendance to determine once and for all a roadmap for the establishment of sociology as a traditional social science. During the meeting a theologian, president of a prominent New England seminary, declared that a starting place should be a radical reordering of the classification of the sciences. Many in the room, including Lester F. Ward, leaned forward in anticipation until the seminarian suggested, 'in my judgment there never will be any reliable sociology until it has its place in a system of sciences founded on theology' (Small 1924: 344). Ward, who was at the time the most well-known American sociologist, let out an exasperated gasp as he threw himself back in his chair in disgust and despair. Small noted that this was 'last appearance of that particular Doctor of Divinity as a constructor of sociology' (Small 1924: 344).

This would not be the last time that possible trajectories were excised from a discipline as it became increasingly conscious of itself as a discourse requiring a clear and stable basis for demarcation. During the so-called era of Classical sociology in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, intellectuals struggled within competitive discursive fields as academic disciplinary boundaries were established via the setting up of institutional positions and university departments, the framing of course syllabi, scientific conferences, introductory textbooks, and practical applications of sociology. During this period, in France, Émile Durkheim institutionalized sociology as a science of 'social facts', and, in Germany, Max Weber took up his chair in sociology at Munich (Lukes 1972; Mommsen and Osterhammel 1989).

Sociology was marked deeply by the uneven national contexts within which it struggled to establish itself. Its early development in France stamped the sociology envisioned by Auguste Comte with an overweening ambition to crown it 'Queen of the Sciences' based on a flimsy or non-existent empirical kingdom. As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1945: 503) put it in his mid-twentieth century review of French sociology: 'French sociology was born early, and it still suffers from the gap which existed, at the time of its birth, between the

boldness of theoretical premonitions and the lack, or insufficiency, of concrete data'. A century beforehand, Karl Marx had argued that the closed philosophical systems formed by the eternal principles of nineteenth-century Germany were theoretical idealizations of the country's socio-political under-development. Later, at a time of rapid social and economic development in Germany, Weber entered his critical dialogue with the ghost of Marx by developing a substantive form of sociology that famously allowed rationality considerable autonomy in the making of capitalism. In his lecture on 'Science as a Vocation', Weber (2013: 341) expected that the sociology of his and each generation would be superseded by the discoveries and developments of future generations. It is the fate of all science that it faces imminent obsolescence. Supersession is the *meaning* of 'progress' in science, Weber argued, the 'inner attitude' that sociologists are driven to adopt towards their own profession. All that can be done is to accept this daemonic fate and work towards it as the forced choice that needs to be made between the 'warring gods' of ultimate values. As only one alternative between warring cultural values, sociology is best pursued without edifying illusions about itself, Weber warned.

In America, dramatic material development amidst cultural and political spectacles appeared to give rise to sociology as the newest, most advanced science of modernity. The first department of sociology in the US, at Chicago, was established by 1892. Yet, like the discipline more widely, the cooperative efforts of determined individuals who constructed sociology contributed a rather eclectic and disparate undertaking, mixing European influences, notably the sociology of Georg Simmel, with emerging national concerns, such as urbanism. Around the same time, the weak and halting development of sociology in Britain was put down to the relative stability of social and political conditions since the eighteenth century unlike the rapid transition and crises experienced elsewhere in Europe and America (Rumney 1945). Gradual change without bouts of social upheaval and crises, it was argued, relieved British intellectuals from the need to study social processes, structures and relations too closely or systematically and to adopt piecemeal analyses and local surveys. At most, social stability and slow, incremental reform in Britain supported the dominant evolutionary schemas of Herbert Spencer and L.T. Hobhouse. However, such accounts omit the pioneering momentum of British sociology during the Edwardian period, before it subsided into passivity, allowing an alternative national sociological tradition to be forgotten or dismissed (Renwick 2012; Scott and Bromley 2014).

Once securely established, the history of sociology overwhelmingly focuses on 'the winners'. During the 1930s, in America, Talcott Parsons aimed to resolve a perceived theoretical crisis by selectively consolidating the 'classics' (minus Marx) in *The Structure of Social Action* as a 'canon' of sociological thought (Camic 1989; Parsons 1937). Parsons believed that a general theory could be woven from the conceptual fragmentation bequeathed by the founders of sociology in order to provide empirical study with more solid foundations. General theoretical systems of the kind constructed by Parsons and, more recently Habermas, tend to reproduce

the problem of fragmentation that they were devised to overcome (Holmwood 1996). Any purely formal arrangement of premises and concepts like 'structure' and 'action' seems bound to succumb to repeated crises of fragmentation and theory reconstruction.

Sociologists from the past most routinely recognized today belong to the Trinitarian 'canon' of classical sociologists, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, sometimes supported by other bit players like Comte or Simmel. More contemporary additions to the canon emerge typically out of a dialogue with 'the classics', either to synthesize, revise or challenge that legacy. This process of successively restricting sociology to the winners impoverishes sociology's claim to be a form of historically reflexive knowledge. In this sense sociology can be considered a collective form of 'amnesia' insofar as the discipline's self-knowledge avoids reconstruction of its own history and modes of thought, past and present. The overall field of the history of sociology results in an eternal dialogue with these most famous precursors, these heroes. In so doing, the uneven processes and struggles of sociology's own making as a form of disciplinary knowledge is obscured and largely forgotten.

This book presses in the opposite direction. It focuses on sociologists who are largely forgotten today, as well as sociologists whose fortunes were revived after languishing in obscurity. By looking at now forgotten figures who were significant in their own time and previously obscure but now revived figures, new insights are opened up into not only individual sociologists themselves, but, more pointedly, our understanding of the discipline of sociology itself – its trajectories, forgotten promises and dead ends.

A Reflexive Sociology of Sociology

This distinctive approach is not intended as a compendium or history of sociology and sociologists. Its aim is to contribute towards the development of a historical sociology of sociology formed within and, at the same time, producing particular institutional and interpersonal fields. What did 'sociology' mean to those scholars present at the birth of the discipline? How has the discipline been shaped, organized, and institutionalized since? One cannot address these questions adequately guided solely by the light of our canonical ancestors. Rather, it becomes most important to understand who, when, where, and why sociologists became excluded from the canon, how they became 'failures'. How does a figure as prominent as Lester Ward, the first president of the American Sociological Society (ASA), by all accounts the 'father of American sociology', become forgotten within a decade? What were the political, economic, and ideological conditions that led to Raymond Aron's prominence during the post-war era, and how have those conditions changed, such that he is almost erased from sociological discourse today?

We are therefore interested in 'failures', that is, sociologists whose projects did not 'catch on'. These figures might have been minor academics throughout

their career, but many had considerable success within the discipline during their lifetimes, only to find themselves left behind. Others, like Norbert Elias, as Stephen Mennell shows in his chapter, were neglected for much of their career, headed toward obscurity, when suddenly his oeuvre and reputation was resurrected, not least through the collective efforts of strategically-situated individuals, as well as the physical and intellectual energies of the ageing Elias himself. How does such a comeback occur late in life? What were the conditions and chances that occurred to draw such attention to an obscure, often misunderstood figure disinclined toward self-promotion? Who were his allies? What was the role of publications, journals, and other resources mobilized on his behalf?

Indeed, in all cases, the institutional resources, materials, and practices of scholarly labour are essential objects of interest in establishing any sociology of sociologists. This approach, in line with the emerging 'new sociology of ideas' (Camic and Gross 2004; Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011), focuses on the local interactions of academics 'in the wild' so to speak. Authors' texts are placed within the context in which they were written. The current turn toward academic practice, however, has the potential to neglect broader, macro-sociological factors that condition the development of ideas. Theoretically, we therefore adopt a 'processual' or 'relational' approach informed by the social theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Norbert Elias, and Michel Foucault (Bourdieu 2004; Elias 1987; Foucault 2002). The concepts of 'field', 'capital', and '*habitus*' are familiar to contemporary sociologists, and have been applied within the academic context in Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus* (1988) and *The State Nobility* (1996). Elias' process theory highlights the interaction between social *habitus* and individual *habitus*, while also alerting us to the 'social fund of knowledge' which pre-exists knowledge production (Elias 1987). Though not a figurational theorist, Foucault's archaeological method provides one means of analysing discourses as structures composed of internal relations that develop across epistemological 'thresholds' (Foucault 2002).

Our approach is equal parts *archaeological*, *figurational* and *reflexive* in so far as it draws upon the sociologies of knowledge presented by Foucault, Elias and Bourdieu (Elias 1987; Foucault 2002, Bourdieu 2004). In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault laid out his program for understanding what a discourse *is*, and what considerations must be taken into account should one attempt to grasp where, when, and how they emerge and evolve (Foucault 2002). The first task in this regard is a radical deconstruction of the signifier itself – in this case, 'sociology'. Foucault wrote, 'These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense' (Foucault 2002: 29). What was meant by the term 'sociology' in the nineteenth century was very different from our contemporary conception. It circulated within a context of interrelated institutions, economic and social processes, behavioral patterns, norms, and epistemic virtues that were substantially different from the relations and institutions of later phases. For Foucault (1989) an *épistème* can be identified retrospectively as the apparatus that establishes the conditions

of possibility for statements that are acceptable to and verified by a field of scientific expertise from all the possible statements and delimits what statements might be classified as 'scientific'. Such *épistèmes* are, therefore, conditional on relations that are both internal and external to the discourse itself. Their norms, procedures and signifying content exist as constellations and as processes which bear some resemblances to other discursive forms, but are also highly particular and unique.

In order to sift through the 'wheat of relevant information' we should try to locate possible *points of diffraction* of the discourse, characterized by either incompatibility or equivalence between two objects, types of enunciation, or concepts (Foucault 2002: 58, 73). For example, the periods before and after the formations of the American and British sociological associations were such moments of possible diffraction. However, we must also study the *economy* of the discursive constellation; that is, the intellectual space available within the emergent positivity. We must consider the discourse of sociology in relation to the *function* (or lack thereof) that the discourse served for a field of *non-discursive practices*.

Thus, we have three formal levels of discursive analysis: points of diffraction, the economy of the field, and the external function; all of which are co-dependent yet irreducible to the others. Foucault proceeded to outline four potential emergences within a discursive formation's evolution:

1. *Threshold of positivity* – the moment in which a discursive practice achieves individuality and autonomy; as a single system that enables the formation of statements to be put in operation.
2. *Threshold of epistemologization* – when a group of statements are articulated that claim to validate coherent norms over a realm of knowledge.
3. *Threshold of scientificity* – when the above epistemological figure obeys a number of formal criteria and certain laws for the construction of propositions.
4. *Threshold of formalization* – when this scientific discourse, in turn, defines axioms, legitimate propositional structures, and mechanisms for tolerating transformations (Foucault 2002: 205–6).

These thresholds are points of reference within multi-directional evolutions across all dimensions of the discourse. As historical emergences, they do not exist independently of, or fully replace, pre-existing forms of discourse. Rather, different thresholds represent identifiable moments in which rules, patterns of behavior, and inter-relationships, both internal and external, are made more concrete, predictable, and determining.

Along broadly similar lines, Norbert Elias' figurational sociology suggested an analysis of the 'sociogenesis' and 'psychogenesis' of processes of structural formations (Elias 2000). Elias' sociology opens the possibility for biographical consideration of particular figures while maintaining recognition of the

structural, disciplinary field within which they were constituted. Like Foucault, Elias conceived of knowledge not as the unfolding accumulation of inherently accurate or true knowledge as perceived by a transcendental subject. Rather, Elias considered individual contributions to knowledge as always premised upon the historical accumulation and context of knowledge that exist at particular points of time. Despite its many ruptures and 'breaks' knowledge is always constituted *in media res*.

Sociological theories of knowledge have to break with the firmly entrenched tradition according to which every person in terms of her or his own knowledge is a beginning. No person ever is. Every person, from the word go, enters a pre-existing knowledge stream. He or she may later improve and augment it. But it is always an already existing social fund of knowledge which is advanced in this manner, or perhaps made to decline (Elias 1987: xvii).

The development of knowledge is a process, not a static system that is settled at any moment. The modern detached scientific perspective on nature, emerged from prototypical versions of this way of thinking as it became increasingly defined by rules and habitualized practices (Elias 1987: xx). As such, one can always extend one's analysis farther and farther back in time *ad infinitum*. Particular ways of knowing are preceded by other ways of not-knowing, and may later regress back into relative ignorance, providing the conditions for a novel emergence within the creative process of discovery. Which direction these movements take cannot be imputed *a priori*, but must be understood within the theoretical frame of figurations formed by dynamic processes.

At the same time, the construction of disciplines takes place within a field of competitive intellectual actors (Bourdieu 1988; Collins 1998). Thus, sociologists at the turn of the twentieth century engaged in what Thomas Gieryn called 'boundary-work': the concerted effort to distinguish real science from amateur and non-scientific versions of sociology (Gieryn 1983). The task that lies before us, then, is to position the figures of interest in the broadest context of what might be called their sociopolitical 'worldview', as well as within a specific spatio-temporal field of forces struggling for individual and disciplinary recognition within and outside of the university.

Since the sociologist is necessarily situated in the world that they seek to analyse, a degree of reflexivity must be brought to bear on sociology's implicit assumptions and misrecognitions of itself and the problems of complicity with the spontaneous immediacy of everyday forms of knowledge. As Bourdieu argued, the 'sociology of sociology is a fundamental dimension of sociological epistemology' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 68). It is not merely a question therefore of focussing on the biographical trajectory of individual sociologists. This would excessively individualize what Elias (1991) usefully called the 'social habitus'. Within the complex chains of interdependency that ensnare individual sociologists, one – the sociological – acquires a special significance. Such a 'sociological habitus' always

emerges as a break with the general social habitus formed by everyday routines and the implicit assumptions of national societies.

The 'sociological habitus' begins to re-model the seemingly unmediated, spontaneous nature and implicit national habitus of everyday life. Acquiring a sociological habitus opens up a process of specialization and separation from the practical immediacy of everyday life. As the discipline comes to appear too remote from urgent problems, calls are made for a re-engaged 'public sociology'. Yet the sociological habitus is far from a serene calling unto itself. It involves choices and struggles between alternative, competing perspectives, research problems, methodologies, and professional and political networks. It demands a display of scholarly competence appropriate to the field and sub-field, demonstrating an ease and familiarity with its approved knowledge set and modes of self-presentation. Professional habit and self-images, as well as the profits of ritualistic transgression, only became possible once sociology has acquired institutional recognition as a basic university subject.

Without the collective effort of reflexive self-understanding, sociologists run the risk of projecting their individual habitus onto the object of study in which 'scientific discourse' is mobilized to express unconscious sentiments like resentment, ambition, disdain, a whole range of unanalysed experiences and feelings about the social world (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The theoretical approach adopted here, therefore, focuses historical attention on disciplinary fields and formations, including:

- a) the overall trajectory of discipline(s),
- b) the internal elements and relations between theories and statements, and
- c) canonization projects during or after a scholar's career.

This represents the first or 'sociological' dimension of the study, establishing the 'context' in its wider sense. The second level of analysis examines the individual biography of one or more agents within this context. Here we are interested in the entry of individuals into the disciplinary field at a certain stage in its institutional development. Specific dates and geographical locations are established in relation to the epistemological structure of the discipline at that time and place. We must further evaluate the relationship of individual 'habitus' to the content of theories and the trajectory of the disciplinary field, past, present, and future. Finally, institutional support, including material resources, student acolytes, and peer recognition, are significant factors for plotting the direction of the sociologist's trajectory.

How to be Forgotten

In this volume, we have sought a wide range of contributions to address the question of why certain sociologists and schools of thought become forgotten. The

issue of who can be deemed 'forgotten' or 'failed' is a complicated definitional issue, and, indeed, we do not imply the sociologists as individuals have 'failed' in a purely epistemological sense. Rather the discipline of sociology has *itself* failed in two senses: first, by restricting its historical self-conception to canonical figures it neglects the actual history of its discursive developments. The second failure follows from the first insofar as sociology's claim to be a form of reflexive knowledge is limited by the arrest or misrecognition of sociological thought past and present. This book represents a move towards recovering this forgotten legacy and attempts to begin the process of reflexive reconstruction.

As Elias would chide us, the sociology of sociology does not begin from a zero-point in the present. It builds on previous work in the field of the 'sociology of sociology'. From its earliest origins, sociology has concerned itself with the emergence of sociological thought. August Comte's three stage model moving from the Theological to Metaphysical to Positivist phases of human history and thought sought to connect changes in the infrastructure of social order to changes in the orientation of social thought (Comte 1975). Regardless of the merits of the Positivist legacy, subsequent generations of sociologists have concerned themselves with the organization of their own disciplinary knowledge, seeking to root the development of social understanding (or, perhaps, lack thereof) in relation to changes in the structure of the social environment.

Karl Mannheim, for example, isolated the shift from epistemological to psychological to sociological interpretations of knowledge during the rapid transformation of social mobility since the Enlightenment (Mannheim 1985). His colleague in Frankfurt, Herbert Marcuse, similarly sought explanation for the shift from Hegelian 'Reason' to Marxist 'Revolution' in the changing structure of industrial capitalist society (Marcuse 1941). Subsequent analyses, drawn from the New Left critique of monopoly capitalism and the neglected standpoints of the working class, women and ethnic minorities, critically reassessed the hegemonic discourse of structural functionalism and quantitative social research (Gouldner 1970; Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1974; Therborn 1976). While much of this sociology of sociology provided insights into the relationship between social scientific ideology and the broader class structure of late capitalism, rarely did these works penetrate to the level of academic practice.

Under the influence of Thomas Kuhn, a number of scholars and historians began consideration of sociology as a shared 'paradigm' established by a scholarly community (Haskell 2000; Kuhn 1962; Ross 1992). Among the most promising of these agendas was the 'schools' approach recommended by Edward Tiryakian (1979). Since sociology rarely accumulates 'knowledge' in the manner of scientific communities described by Kuhn, the sociology of sociology should dedicate attention to study of various 'schools' of sociology. Charismatic founders of schools like structural-functionalism promoted methodological approaches that were subsequently 'depersonalized' and diffused by students. The institutional dynamics which extend the reputation of the school also foreshadows its inevitable downfall as success leads to attempts by rivals to overthrow the newly dominant paradigm. One

need think only of the unchallenged dominance of Parsonian structural functionalism and its rapid wholesale overhaul during the last third of the twentieth century.

Similar studies focus on the institutional dynamics, particularly the patronage networks and resource bases of sociological research, as in Turner and Turner (1990). In covering the history of American sociology in relation to the base of economic support, the authors note shifts during the pre-World War I, interwar and post-war periods, which corresponded with changes in the institutional support for academic sociological research. More recently, the so-called 'new sociology of ideas' has rooted such developments in relation to interdisciplinary struggles for position. Charles Camic, for example, explains the success of Parsons' *Structure of Social Action*, with reference to the disciplinary battles between sociology, economics and biology raging at Harvard at the time of Parsons' writing (Camic 1989). This struggle to exercise command over interdisciplinary turf explains the success of Parsons' charter for a yet to be institutionally established discipline.

Other research, such as that of Andrew Abbott (1999, 2001), shares with the new sociologists of ideas and the institutionalists, an interest in the disciplinary and resource struggles amongst academics, and retains the insight of the Tiryakian 'schools' approach that sociology does not tend to accumulate knowledge in the traditional scientific sense. Rather, sociologists recycle broadly similar concerns while constantly revolutionizing the categorical terms used to describe them, such as the cyclical repetition of the supposed opposition between 'realism' and 'constructionism'. These patterns of cultural recycling tend to occur in generational waves as young scholars engage in an Oedipal struggle against the gerontocracy of elders who monopolize the reward structures of the academic profession. Abbott admitted that this patterned generational change, or 'slip-clutch', does embody a form of dynamism, 'even if that change is organized in a regular succession whereby the young build their careers on forgetting and rediscovery, while the middle-aged are doomed to see the common sense of their graduate school years refurbished and republished as brilliant new insight' (Abbott 2001: 148).

Various approaches have the potential to address the concerns of the present book. Most commentaries are dedicated to canonical or 'successful' sociologists who receive funding, establish a paradigm and contribute to the hegemonic stabilization of sociological knowledge in a given period. But, what about those scholars who do not extend into the history books and drop out of the conservation of sociological networks? Are the dynamics which lead to the success of a paradigm the same as that which leads to 'failure'? Such is the question addressed by Neil McLaughlin in 'How to become a Forgotten Intellectual', a study of Erich Fromm, in contrast to the new sociologist of ideas, Michele Lamont's analysis of Derrida's success (Lamont 1987; McLaughlin 1998). McLaughlin demonstrates that the rise and fall of Fromm's reputation had much to do with the success of his ideas in the broader public sphere. The popularity of his research in public discourse, and the broadness of his humanistic concerns, in fact, contributed to the decline of his reputation within specialized academic disciplines. This example points to a dynamic of considerable interest for the present volume, namely the limiting

role of academic disciplinarity as contributing to the 'failure' of given sociologists and sociological traditions. As we will see time and again, those scholars whose work transcends the boundaries of sociology as institutionally defined tend to be isolated from the canonical lineage.

It is not only sociology that engages in intellectual fratricide. Randall Collins (1998) traces how intellectual networks in the oldest discipline, philosophy, have been beset by disagreement and rivalry in ways that structure the creative possibilities of the field. Such a social constructivist theory of intellectual field does not fatally undermine epistemological judgements about the reality of the object of study. Truth cannot be 'true' in itself, the pre-social outpouring of a disembodied mind. All the criteria mobilized for establishing the truth of statements about reality emerge as a process over generations through social networks. Truth, including the truth of the network itself, is communicated through verbal symbols formed by shared rituals of interaction. As Collins (1998: 860) argues, echoing Elias, 'we are always *in media res*, in the middle of things'. Individuals only form ideas as part of the conversation and problems of wider social networks. This is why sociological reflexivity often appears as such an affront to the established truths of science and philosophy.

Sociological Amnesia

We have sought original contributions from a range of scholars interested in developing a reflexive historical sociology of sociology. We have asked the authors to study their 'cases' in relation to the concern with disciplinary 'amnesia'. This includes the trajectory of scholars who were once famous, but later fell into relative obscurity. Peter Baehr's study of Raymond Aron's reputation in British sociology is the first of subsequent chapters. Baehr highlights the considerable reputation that Aron enjoyed within postwar British sociology, as well as his popularity among intellectual journals and public opinion more broadly. However Baehr's research into the syllabi of British undergraduate sociology reveals his near absence from teaching. This reflects the importance of synthetic texts consolidating a thinker's point of view, as well as the role of teaching as a necessary condition for retention of a sociologist's *œuvre*.

The next chapter, by Bortolini and Cossu, focuses, not on the neglect of scholars themselves, but rather on two similar books written by Clifford Geertz and Robert Bellah. The study charts the course and migration of the books due to the nature of the disciplines in relation to the authors' performative contribution. Bortolini and Cossu's conceptual innovation of considering the works and the authors themselves as cultural objects effectively demonstrates the interaction between what might be called the 'variation and selection process' bearing on the disciplinary field. The chapter also gives insight in the context of other disciplines at the time – e.g., religious studies, anthropology and history – and why certain opportunities for cross fertilization were available for Geertz and not Bellah.

The role of disciplinary interfaces is also important in Kieran Durkin's chapter on Erich Fromm. Following a biographical review that builds to the period analysed by McLaughlin, Durkin returns to consider what else is lost when a sociologist drops off the map: namely the content of the research. Summaries of two cases of empirical research put to rest assumptions that Fromm was an armchair psychoanalyst, while demonstrating the promise of recovering Fromm's insights into character and social psychology.

Similar issues relating to the role of content and ideas emerge in the chapters by E. Stina Lyon on Viola Klein and Liz Stanley on Olive Schreiner. Stina Lyon assesses the merits of Klein's forgotten dissertation on the French novelist, Celine. There are many instances of 'amnesia' within the chapter, including Klein's own neglect of this work in her later achievements. It is interesting to see the way in which Klein's analysis connect to changes in Celine's career as they occurred in real time. This draws attention to the potential pitfalls of direct application of the sociology of knowledge to single authors. In Stina Lyon's retrieval of Klein's dissertation, the reader encounters the way Klein's analysis of Celine's 'detached' literary style contributed to her later work on patriarchy in language. Her concluding assessment of Klein's rejection of Mannheim's advice demonstrates that it was the literary and linguistic side of her analytic style that was retained, while the sociology of knowledge was sidelined. One can see from earlier reflection on her dissertation that Klein had already experienced the 'failure' of the Mannheimian approach.

In her study of Schreiner, Stanley opens up a productive contrast between networks and figurations that contribute to exploration of long-term relationships as significant factors within social outcomes. Here, figural analysis is used to show how Schreiner's work and fate was shaped by the confluence of international connections, at once political, sociological and cultural, at the interstices of 'race', nation, class and gender in the context of imperialism and militarism. The analysis effectively demonstrates the way in which political-ethical concerns seemed to drive intellectual interaction as much as the content of the ideas. Similarly, these interests contribute to different patterns of integration with academic disciplines, and eventually to patterns of 'forgetting' within these disciplines.

In her chapter, Bridget Fowler provides a powerful restatement of Lucien Goldmann's relevance (and some limitations) for present-day sociology. The structure of the chapter allows a careful unpicking of the 'tragic vision' and social structure leading to more programmatic statements for a sociology of literature and class. These observations strengthen the comparison with Bourdieu that Fowler develops across the chapter. As she reminds us, Bourdieu adopted Goldmann's concept of 'genetic structuralism' as part of a response to the now largely forgotten 'structuralist controversy' that engulfed the human sciences in France in the 1960s as a way to by-pass the false opposition posed between existentialism and structuralism.

In their chapter, Dawson and Masquelier's distillation of G.D.H. Cole's associational sociology reminds us that one need not be called a 'sociologist' to

be a sociologist. While recognizing the work going on in the supposedly empty period in British sociology prior to 1950, the authors' comparison with Durkheim and a kind of Rousseauian sociology is especially striking. Through this lens, we observe the way that Cole's political and normative commitment to guild socialism was shaped by his now neglected social theory.

More recently, the rise of actor-network-theory has revived interest in the work of Gabriel Tarde. Álvaro Santana-Acuña's study considers Tarde's monadology in light of the uncanonized field. The resulting chapter becomes a study of one 'path not taken', for sociology as a whole. Santana-Acuña's summarization of monadology, including the prehistory and Tarde's innovation of making monads 'social' introduces the reader to the significance of his work, while attending to potential reasons why Tarde's sociology has begun making a comeback in the contemporary context of poststructuralism, the rehabilitation of agency and the crisis of the 'social'.

Not all of our contributors adopt an explicitly figurational or relational approach to the dynamics of the sociological field. Indeed, not all of the figures discussed can be considered 'sociologists' in a strict sense. As the chapters by Davidson and Memos illustrate, some like Castoriadis and MacIntyre would have categorized themselves as philosophers and it is only with elastic semantic tension that the label of sociology can be appended to their work. Philosophers have generally been content to establish the epistemological, ethical and political preconditions for sociology as an empirical science. Even here, however, philosophers grappling with social and political problems cannot help but stray into territory that sociology would like to reserve for itself. A politically-committed philosopher like Louis Althusser, for instance, was inspired by certain 'striking turns of phrase' to read very closely a limited number of texts and from this to elaborate contrasts, oppositions and connections as the basic procedure for constructing theory: 'I constructed a whole philosophical system as if it had no object (in the sense that science has an object), but was rather a practical and polemical affair, and I began to develop a practical and polemical view of philosophy, based on a model of political thought I was working out at the same time' (Althusser 1993: 169). Polemical intent, of course, did not prevent philosophers from pronouncing on matters of sociological enquiry. Radical political philosophy was defined for much of the twentieth century by the crisis of Marxism and the class nature of Soviet society. Too often, as Memos reminds us, solutions were proclaimed polemically by stale political categories like 'totalitarianism', dictatorship or socialist state in the absence of a comparative historical sociology of social structure, relations and dynamics.

As important as the analysis of 'failed' or 'forgotten' sociologists or sociological texts are, we are equally interested in the rare occasions in which a sociologist moves from obscurity to renown. The most dramatic instance of this shift is the case of Norbert Elias. In his chapter Stephen Mennell situates Elias in the intellectual and political context of his time in post-war Britain. Then, the

intellectual field was shaped by a number of forces, including the anti-Marxism of the Cold War years, advanced not least by the ideological pronouncements of the philosopher of science Karl Popper; a stifling intellectual culture induced by empiricism, social administration, and hegemonic American sociology; and the post-imperial reaction of anthropologists (who exercised a neglected element of hegemony over sociologists). Against the self-evidence of national figurings, Elias (2014: 53–134) posed the problem of what Rodney Needham (1972) called ‘the question of the logical unity of mankind’, something that both Elias and Needham argue cannot be resolved by a priori epistemological fiat but must be determined by empirical study.

As Mennell reminds us, sociological amnesia is aided and abetted by the disciplinary schism between empiricism and theoreticism. A form of sociology concerned with supposedly pre-theoretical forms of data is subject to the effects of heterogeneous influences over the construction of sociological problems. These come to be defined by the immediate concerns of research agencies, governmental policy or media agendas. Constrained by the short-term horizons of the present, empiricist amnesia surrenders the disciplinary autonomy required as a means of orientation for understanding the longer-term trajectory of human society, its possibilities and probabilities. Social theory, meanwhile, wriggles free from its necessary moorings in sustained empirical inquiry. At best, a few examples culled from newspapers often suffices to illustrate intricately constructed conceptual edifices about the latest new beginning in social theory. By calling for a more reflexive approach to sociology’s ‘failures’, this volume begins to offer a corrective to the double trap set for sociology by epistemological and methodological reification.

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